



ENSIGN SEEKS FEEDBACK FROM NEVADA VETERANS

Friday, May 14, 2007

Washington, D.C. - Senator John Ensign, a member of both the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee, is requesting feedback from Nevada's veterans concerning proposed legislation to improve veterans' health care. The specific legislation Ensign would like feedback on is the Veterans' Healthcare Empowerment Act. This bill would allow any veteran with a service-connected disability to obtain treatment at any medical facility that is Medicare or TRICARE eligible. Concerns have been raised by some veterans' service organizations that this legislation could mean the end of the Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare system as we know it.

"I am always looking for innovative ways to improve inefficiencies and remove government red tape, especially when it comes to the care of our veterans," said Ensign. "If the veterans of Nevada believe this would improve the health care they receive, this legislation will have my full support. Veterans may continue going to VA facilities, but this approach will provide them more choices, especially in places like rural Nevada. Rural veterans now are forced to travel hours to be seen by VA providers. The proposed legislation would allow these same individuals to receive quality care in their local community. I do not think veterans in need of health care should be penalized just because they do not live in the city."

Nationwide, there are approximately 2.5 million veterans with service-connected disabilities and some 1.7 million of them currently rely on the VA healthcare system. The purpose of this legislation is to improve service to current users of the VA system while also attracting more eligible veterans to join the system. Another key component would be reducing transition problems for veterans leaving the Department of Defense to enroll in the VA healthcare systems.

"Men and women in uniform who are injured serving America deserve the best care this country can give them, and I am asking the veterans of Nevada if they believe this would help improve the current system," Ensign said. "I am not looking to eliminate the VA health care system but if government bureaucracy is limiting the care and treatment our

veterans are receiving, I want to remove it. Providing health care to those who sacrificed so much for this country is the least a grateful nation can do for its veterans, and I want to ensure these heroes the best care possible."

Veterans with an opinion on this important issue should contact Senator John Ensign via his website at www.ensign.senate.gov. To stay up to date on veteran and all other issues, individuals may sign up for email updates at <http://www.ensign.senate.gov/forms/signup/signup.htm>.

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